

B.I.S. SEN Policy

Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion Policy

Updated review date: 27th July 2020

Next review date: 1st September 2022

Policy Author: Christian Good Yoder Jr.



Table of Contents

● Terms and Meanings.....	2
● Introduction.....	4
● On Inclusivity.....	6
● BIS Protocol for Identifying Children with SEN.....	7
● BIS Protocol for Assessing Children with SEN.....	8
● BIS Protocol for Educating Children with SEN.....	9
● Endnotes.....	10
● Bibliography.....	11

Terms and Meanings

- **Special Educational Needs (SEN):** “Learning difficulties” which hinder the learners’ ability to “benefit from the general education system without support or accommodation.”¹

- **Official Designation of SEN:** “A pupil is eligible for additional educational support based on: an assessment procedure involving a multi-disciplinary team, including members from within and external to the school; a legal document describing the support the pupil is entitled to; a formal, regular review process of the decision.”²

- **Inclusive Education:** “The process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from the culture, curriculum and community of mainstream schools.”³ “The provision of high-quality education in schools that value the rights, equality, access and participation of all learners.”⁴

- **IEP:** “Inclusive Education Plan.”⁵ “These documents set out short- and long-term learning targets for pupils with SEN. The IEPs specify the pupils’ needs and goals, and detail the degree and type of adaptations to be made to the curriculum.”⁶

- **Framework for classification of children with SEN:**
 - “Category A: disabilities with organic origins where there is substantial normative agreement about the categories (for example, sensory, motor, severe and profound intellectual disabilities).
 - Category B: difficulties that do not appear to have organic origins or be directly linked to socioeconomic, cultural or linguistic factors (for example, behavioral difficulties, mild learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties and dyslexia).
 - Category C: difficulties that arise from socio-economic, cultural and/or linguistic factors; some disadvantaged or atypical background that education seeks to compensate for.”⁷

¹European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2017). Access to quality education for children with special educational needs. Page 3.

² European Commission. (2017). Page 3.

³ European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2013). Support for children with special educational needs (SEN). Page 13.

⁴ European Commission. (2017). Page 3.

⁵ European Commission. (2013). Page 16.

⁶ European Commission. (2013). Page 16.

⁷ European Commission. (2013). Page 10.

- Early Intervention: “A range of all necessary interventions - social, medical, psychological and educational - targeted towards children and their families, to meet the special needs of children who show or risk some degree of delay in development.”⁸

⁸ European Commission. (2013). Page 11.



Introduction

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion Policy of Bogaerts International School (BIS) is designed to maximize the educational capacity of all learners and provides appropriate and knowledgeable support to them, their parents, teachers and all others involved in their education.

BIS does not discriminate in its application processes against children with disabilities and against children with SEN. Rather, BIS welcomes and seeks to accommodate *all* learners, *regardless* of their SEN. Therefore, BIS is one of the only schools in Europe that can properly be designated as “fully inclusive.” BIS seeks to continue being a leading example in Belgium and Europe at all times regarding SEN education.

BIS welcomes and actively shapes its diverse student body. This applies to students with SEN and also to those with other disabilities. BIS embraces and promotes the intangible benefits resulting from a learning environment permeated by all types of diverse learners. In keeping with the school mission and goals, everyone who works at BIS believes that all students can reach their highest potential with the right educational approach.

This policy attempts to align itself to the greatest possible extent with current academic, psychological, medical and philosophical recommended approaches to SEN education. This policy further attempts to align itself to the greatest possible extent with all IB recommended approaches to properly educating children with SEN. This policy further attempts to align itself with the European Commission’s most current research findings on providing the best possible support for children with SEN.⁹ The policy is also aligned with relevant Global, European, Belgian and local regulatory entities.

At the outset and in general alignment with the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol,¹⁰ BIS recognizes “the importance of the principles and policy guidelines contained in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in influencing the promotion, formulation and evaluation of the policies, plans, programmes and actions at the national, regional and international levels to further equalize opportunities for persons with disabilities.”¹¹

⁹ European Commission. (2013).

¹⁰ United Nations.(2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

¹¹ United Nations. (2006). Page 1.

BIS further recognizes “the need to promote and protect the human rights of all persons with disabilities, including those who require more intensive support,”¹² and “the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, in enabling persons with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”¹³

Finally, BIS formally accepts the Council of the European Union’s invitation to:

- Ensure wider access to high quality early childhood education and care, in order to give all children - particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special education needs - a sure start.
- Intensify efforts to prevent early school leaving, based on the development of early warning systems identifying pupils at risk; encourage school-wide strategies for inclusion, focused on quality and supported by adequate leadership and teacher training in a lifelong learning perspective.
- Develop more personalized approaches and systemic responses to support all pupils, as well as provide additional help for those with disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special needs.
- Promote successful inclusive education approaches for all pupils, including those with special needs, by making school learning communities in which a sense of inclusion and mutual support is nurtured and in which the talents of all pupils are recognized.”¹⁴

In terms of application, BIS aligns its practical approach to properly educating children with SEN with the findings of the European Commission. “The inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream education has received growing support and international traction over the past 20 years. The Salamanca Statement, which resulted from a UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994, was the first international document to call for the recognition of *the right to inclusive education*. Since then, the principle that regular schools should accommodate every child, with their personal abilities and learning needs, has been reiterated in numerous international policy documents. The European policy context reflects this general trend to *move away from segregated special schooling*. [all italics added]”¹⁵

Accordingly, the core underlying principle of BIS’ practical application of SEN education is inclusivity.

¹² United Nations. (2006). Page 3.

¹³ United Nations. (2006). Page 4.

¹⁴ Council of the European Union. (2010). Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 3013th EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE Council Meeting Brussels, 11 May 2010. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/114374.pdf. Pages 7-8.

¹⁵ European Commission. (2017). Page 3.

I. On Inclusivity

The importance of having a modern and properly implemented SEN policy centered on the principle of inclusivity cannot be overstated. For example, “approximately 800 million young children worldwide are affected by biological, environmental and psychosocial conditions that can limit their cognitive development. In Europe, recent estimates place the number of children with special educational needs (SEN) at 15 million. Conservative estimates state that dyslexia, a learning disability that impedes a person’s ability to read, affects approximately 6 percent of Europe’s population, whilst the prevalence of autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) is also estimated to be higher than previously thought. Children with SEN frequently leave school with few qualifications and are much more likely to become unemployed or economically inactive. In addition to these concerns, the parents of children with SEN experience high levels of stress. If they are not adequately supported, not only will the development of the child suffer, but the family unit as a whole can be placed under considerable strain.”¹⁶

Additionally, “Parents of children with special needs often report feelings of isolation and high levels of stress, with several studies pointing to an increase in depression. The stress of having a child with SEN can challenge family functioning through exerting pressure on parental well-being, the well-being of siblings and other relatives, spousal relationships, extra-spousal relationships, and negative effects on parenting behavior. Parental responsiveness and sensitivity are necessary for children with SEN to develop secure attachments, yet these are liable to be compromised by the stress exerted on some parents. The time-intensive nature of the care required by many children with SEN also presents an inherent risk of parental burn-out. Providing support to parents with SEN is therefore vital to both the flourishing of the child and of the family as a whole.”¹⁷

Especially because “involvement of parents of children with SEN is a vital factor in promoting inclusive schooling.” Unfortunately, much of the time, “this is not easily done in practice, with parents often struggling for adequate resources to be procured for their child. Even in the formulation of IEPs, where schools and local authorities make an explicit commitment to engaging with parents, time constraints often make it impossible for teachers to truly involve parents.”¹⁸

With all of the complexity and multi-faceted difficulties involved with the education of children with SEN, it is extremely important for schools to be anchors for *families* with SEN.

¹⁶ European Commission. (2013). Page 6.

¹⁷ European Commission. (2013). Pages 17-18.

¹⁸ European Commission. (2013). Page 18.

There is ample support for the “inclusivity” approach to educating students with SEN. For example, “much of the research into supporting children with SEN in Europe centres on the concept of inclusive education. The core underlying assumption of this policy for children with SEN is that these children would benefit most from education alongside neurotypical children in mainstream schools, as opposed to special schools catering specifically for those with special needs”¹⁹

The benefits of inclusivity are plethora. For example, “the most prominent beneficiaries of inclusion policies tend to be higher-achieving children with physical or sensory impairments, who might once have been taught in special schools but are now routinely educated in mainstream classes.”²⁰

Additionally, “other pupils may also benefit from the inclusion of Children with SEN in their schools; their inclusion necessitates that teachers devote more energy to the curriculum to ensure it is appropriate for the learning needs of all pupils, which increases teachers’ overall teaching skills. Contact with children with a disability in an inclusive setting is also said to increase familiarity and reduce prejudice over the long term.”²¹

Therefore, in adherence to the strong European political consensus for supporting the inclusion of children with SEN to the greatest possible extent in mainstream education as well as in alignment with the European Commission’s recommended approach to educating children with SEN, BIS aims to be fully inclusive for all students with SEN and seeks to fully integrate all students with SEN into mainstream classes, whenever and wherever possible.

II. BIS Protocol for Identifying Children with SEN

“It is widely accepted that effective support for children with SEN should begin as early as possible.”²² This can be attributed to the fact that “research emphasises the need for effective screening and diagnostic systems to identify developmental disorders at the earliest possible stage, clearly indicating that the chances of overcoming difficulties are significantly enhanced by early identification.”²³ Therefore, BIS recognizes the urgency with which it must work to identify SEN in prospective and enrolled students. The SEN and Inclusion protocol of BIS therefore begins with the identification of children potentially with SEN and their specific needs.

¹⁹ European Commission. (2013). Page 13.

²⁰ European Commission. (2013). Page 14.

²¹ European Commission. (2013). Page 14.

²² European Commission. (2013). Page 11.

²³ European Commission. (2013). Page 8.

First, BIS actively screens all prospective students for both diagnosed and undiagnosed SEN. Specifically, BIS collects relevant medical documentation via the parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) during the application process. The appointed SEN Coordinator evaluates such documents from qualified and relevant medical experts and determines whether the prospective student has formally diagnosed SEN. If so, the SEN Coordinator provides an Official Designation of SEN. If not, the SEN Coordinator communicates with relevant family members/guardians how to receive a proper medical diagnosis of SEN so that the prospective student can in turn receive the Official Designation of SEN upon such medical diagnosis.

Second, BIS actively screens all enrolled students as standard operating procedure. “The literature...stresses the importance of ensuring teachers are properly trained in assisting and helping to identify developmentally challenging children.”²⁴ The screening of enrolled students accordingly begins with the proper training and education of teachers via in-service events, external professional development subsidization, and other methods, to be capable of screening SEN in the general student population. The SEN Coordinator conducts all related trainings and provides all related information to teachers and relevant staff members with the approval and under the supervision of relevant Coordinators, the Head of School, and other relevant administrators. Teachers and other relevant school staff conduct surveys, evaluate students, and communicate all findings and details with the SEN Coordinator. The SEN Coordinator manages the collection and distribution of all relevant data.

Concerning individual students suspected of having SEN, the SEN Coordinator determines if the student in question needs a formal medical evaluation or reevaluation. If so, the SEN Coordinator sets a meeting with the parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) to go over the data and screening findings and to make recommendations regarding the formal evaluation or reevaluation of the student.

The SEN Coordinator also creates and distributes to all parents general educational information about SEN, identifying SEN in children at home, resource lists, and recommended facilities for diagnosing and helping children with SEN.

III. BIS Protocol for Assessing Children with SEN

BIS does not formally assess any children relating to SEN. Instead, BIS depends on formal medical diagnosis conducted by qualified professionals in the field of child psychology, learning disorders, etc. This is because the literature remains consistent in its findings that

²⁴ European Commission. (2013). Page 9.

“experienced clinical judgment, taking into account a variety of sources, remains the most reliable tool for diagnosis.”²⁵

BIS therefore defers in matters of medical and psychological diagnosis, medication prescription assignment and dosage, and other such matters to such experienced clinical judgment.

BIS, at the request of parents, provides recommendations to parents regarding the formal medical evaluation of their child’s SEN of qualified professionals in the correct field and with the correct qualifications. Once the student in question has received a formal medical diagnosis of SEN by a qualified medical professional in a relevant field, the appointed SEN Coordinator evaluates such documents and determines whether the student shall receive an Official Designation of SEN.

IV. BIS Protocol for Educating Children with SEN

In order to receive academic accommodations related to SEN, students must first be issued a Formal Designation of SEN by the appointed SEN Coordinator. As explained in Sections II and III, students can be issued a Formal Designation of SEN either in the application process, or as an existing enrolled student. The SEN Coordinator will assist parents and guardians of children suspected of having SEN with the formal assessment process, as explained in Section III. Once the student has the Formal Designation of SEN, they are eligible to receive academic accommodations related to their SEN.

The cornerstone of educating children with SEN is the use of “Inclusive Education Plans” (IEPs).²⁶ BIS fully recognizes that there are numerous renditions of IEPs throughout the world’s numerous school districts. BIS therefore models its IEP system after the European Commission’s guidance. Specifically, “these documents set out short- and long-term learning targets for pupils with SEN, enabling teachers to consider how the mainstream curriculum might be adapted and personalized. The IEPs specify the pupils’ needs and goals, and detail the degree and type of adaptations to be made to the curriculum in order to evaluate their progress. An IEP can also serve as a contract between parents, teachers and other professionals. Positive strength-based approaches are used to determine appropriate curriculum accommodations and adaptations.”²⁷

BIS implements and utilizes IEP systems at the discretion of the SEN Coordinator, Head of School and other qualified members of staff whenever possible to assist with the education of children with SEN.

²⁵ European Commission. (2013). Page 8.

²⁶ European Commission. (2013). Page 3.

²⁷ European Commission. (2013). Page 16.

In addition to IEPs, BIS implements classroom and school infrastructure upgrades and adaptations whenever possible to assist as many students with SEN as possible. The details of such infrastructure upgrades can be seen in the “BIS Accessibility Plan in Appendix A.

Overall, BIS attempts to model itself to be a school where children with SEN are integrated into mainstream classes, and where neurotypical pupils are informed of the implications of various syndromes and disorders. For instance, “inflexible behavior or acute reactions to change of routine might be perceived as defiant by teachers and peers, if not properly understood as symptomatic of the child’s condition.”²⁸

²⁸ European Commission. (2013). Pages 14-15.

Endnotes

Council of the European Union. (2010). *Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 3013th EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE Council Meeting Brussels, 11 May 2010*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/114374.pdf.

European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2013). *Support for children with special educational needs (SEN)*.

European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2017). *Access to quality education for children with special educational needs*.

European Parliament, (2018). *European Parliament resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU (2017/2224(INI))*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0247_EN.html.

United Nations.(2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

Bibliography

Council of the European Union. (2010). *Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 3013th EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE Council Meeting Brussels, 11 May 2010*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/114374.pdf.

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. (2003). *Special Needs Education in Europe - Thematic Publication, January 2003*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/special-needs-education-in-europe_s_ne_europe_en.pdf.

European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2013). *Support for children with special educational needs (SEN)*.

European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. (2017). *Access to quality education for children with special educational needs*.

European Parliament. (2018). *European Parliament resolution of 12 June 2018 on modernisation of education in the EU (2017/2224(INI))*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0247_EN.html.

United Nations. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

United Nations. (1994). *General Assembly, Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 4 March 1994*. Retrieved on 16/6/2019 from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/gadocs/standardrules.pdf>.